

**\*\*\* SAFETY MESSAGE from the Director of Army Safety \*\*\***

27 June 2016

Commanders, Senior Leaders, and Senior Safety Directors,

I ask for your assistance in stimulating appropriate action through leader and command emphasis to preclude further loss as the result of inadvertent mixing of live and blank ammunition. Earlier this fiscal year, the mixing of blank and ball ammunition resulted in a fatal Soldier accident on an Army range. Additionally, two incidents were recently reported involving the inadvertent mixing of blank and ball small arms ammunition (SAA) on Army training ranges.

During training operations, there is a real chance ball SAA may be mixed with blank SAA. This can occur when live rounds are inadvertently mixed with blanks during linking and clipping of rounds, or when a magazine has not been fully downloaded after a live shoot, leaving live ammunition in the magazine. Unless disciplined measures are taken to ensure ball and blank ammunition are not mixed, these mistakes are extremely difficult to detect, especially at night and in situations of duress and fatigue, the exact environment our Soldiers train.

To preclude mixing blank SAA with ball SAA and prevent related mishaps, I recommend leaders at all levels engage their subordinate leaders and Soldiers to review the risk reduction measures below and apply them as the situation warrants:

- Conduct operations involving blank SAA in areas segregated from operations involving live SAA.
- Inspect areas and equipment to be used for operations (e.g., inspections, packaging) involving blank SAA before use to ensure ball SAA is not present.
- Limit areas and equipment used to process blank SAA to blank SAA until such operations are completed. Check equipment to ensure there is no blank SAA present and remove blank SAA from the area.
- Conduct a 100-percent visual inspection of SAA prior to linking, clipping or carton packing, and conduct a separate, independent 100-percent inspection before final packing, to ensure only the appropriate (live or blank) SAA has been linked, clipped or packed in cartons.
- Train Soldiers to understand the difference between blank and ball SAA.
- Conduct safety briefings and ammunition inspections before live-fire and blank-fire training.
- Apply prudent risk management for field training exercises (FTX) that are planned and conducted in conjunction with live-fire and qualification training.
- Submit DA Form 581, Request for Issue and Turn-In of Ammunition, for training events involving ball SAA separately from training events involving blank SAA.
- Issue, transport and turn-in ball SAA separately from blank SAA whenever possible.
- Ensure local ammunition supply point and range standing operating procedures (SOPs) for the management of blank SAA, ball SAA and other military munitions are understood and followed.

Through the precepts of mission command we can empower and engage our leaders at all echelons to accept prudent risk and train as we fight while at the same time reducing the risk to the force through adherence to standards.

Army Safe is Army Strong!

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